

University Academy 501 Chipeta Way Salt Lake City, Utah 84108

March 25, 2008





Utah State Office of Education 250 East 500 South P.O. Box 144200 Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

THE REPORT OF THE VISITING TEAM REVIEWING

University Academy 501 Chipeta Way Salt Lake City, UT 84108

March 25, 2008

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

DIVISION OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS

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FOREWORD

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, March 25, 2008, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of University Academy is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the Visiting Team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Karina Rasmussen is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at University Academy, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at University Academy.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D. State Superintendent of Public Instruction

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UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

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Ross Van Vreeken	Executive Director
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UNIVERSITY ACADEMY

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Karina Rasmussen	Principal
Summer Schenk	Education Specialist

Therapists

Jim KahnDirector, Psychiatric ServicesAaron AhernRadha Modlover, LCSWSandra Whitehorse, Ph.D.Laura Cover, LCSWAmanda Stoekel

Erin McGlade Suzanne Tyndall, Ph.D.

Support Staff

Paige Baucom Sarah Johnson Collin Vestal Katie Johnson Patrick Ripley

Faculty

Karina Rasmussen Summer Schenk

UNIVERSITY ACADEMY

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of University Academy is provide students with a positive educational experience while assessing their unique needs and providing advocacy to optimize success in their home schools.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

We believe that:

- 1. Students' needs should be the primary focus of all decisions impacting the work of the school.
- 2. A student's self-esteem is enhanced by positive relationships and mutual respect among and between students and staff.
- 3. All students are entitled to appropriate advocacy.
- 4. It is crucial for school staff to get to know the whole child so that recommendations to home schools will maximize a student's opportunities for success.

DESIRED RESULTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING (DRSLs)

Positive Learning Environment

- 1. Students learn appropriate classroom behavior/etiquette.
- 2. Students learn how to work with and support peers in an appropriate way.
- 3. Students take responsibility for their actions and accept natural consequences in an appropriate manner.
- 4. Students develop and learn how to use appropriate coping strategies in an academic setting.

<u>Assessment of Unique Needs</u>

- 1. Students learn how to talk to school staff about their emotional needs.
- 2. Students participate in a variety of formal and informal assessments.
- 3. Students are expected to participate in classroom activities

Advocacy

- Students develop self-advocacy skills to get their educational needs met.
 Students learn how to enlist the help of parents, counselors and others when they need support.

Date of visit: March 25, 2008

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Georgia M. Loutensock, Education Specialist, Utah State Office of Education

VISITING TEAM REPORT

UNIVERSITY ACADEMY

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

University Academy is a private special purpose school located within the University Neuropsychiatric Institute. It was established in 1986 and provides educational services to children and adolescents who are unable to attend their regular or home schools due to mental health issues.

University Academy serves two populations in a day treatment program. Kidstar serves children in grades Kindergarten through sixth grade, and Teenscope is the program designed for adolescents in grades seven through twelve. Students attend day treatment every Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The school portion of the day is typically three hours long. University Academy typically provides educational services to approximately 25-30 youth each day. The average length of stay in the day treatment and school program is two to four weeks. University Academy serves youth from all socioeconomic backgrounds with a full range of mental health diagnoses.

Due to the students' short length of stay, the focus of the educational program differs from a more traditional school. Even though students are typically withdrawn from their neighborhood schools during the course of their treatment, students continue to work on assignments from their regular classroom teachers. Educational specialists from University Academy work closely with a child's home school, and have frequent contact with teachers and counselors to ensure a seamless transition back to the neighborhood school when discharged.

University Academy sees its role as one of advocacy. The staff provides recommendations to home schools, and teaches students and parents how to better get their needs met in an educational setting.

- a) What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?
 - Findings from the school's analysis of its profile helped University Academy to narrow its mission to emphasize its role of advocacy for students and to strengthen the way they teach students to advocate for themselves.
- *What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?*

Future school profiles should consider more feedback and input from parents and students. The short student stay makes this difficult, but not impossible.

c) To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?

The school's self-study was short, but adequately outlined both its strengths and areas needing improvement.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

Further inquiry is needed from parents and students. At the present time, the exit survey for parents includes only one question regarding the educational program. It would be beneficial to solicit additional information through the exit survey or other tools designed expressly for the educational program.

CHAPTER 2: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARDS

Mission, Beliefs and Desired Results for Student Learning (DRSLs):

- a) To what degree were the school's mission statement, beliefs, and DRSLs developed and/or revised collaboratively by the school community to define a compelling purpose and vision for the school and to support student achievement?
 - The school's mission, beliefs and DRSLs were developed by the educational staff and approved by all stakeholders within the program. There was no input from parents or students because of the short time they are involved with the program.
- b) To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's DRSLs?
 - The school's mission and beliefs are in direct alignment with the school's DRSLs, and reflect the philosophy and practices of University Academy.
- c) Describe the indicators (measures) that have been developed to assess the school's progress in assessing the DRSLs.
 - University Academy is just beginning to develop measures to assess progress on the DRSLs. At the present time, observations and informal assessments are used to assess the DRSLs.

d) To what extent do the school's mission, beliefs, and DRSLs guide the procedures, policies and decisions of the school, and appear evident in the culture of the school?

The school's mission, beliefs and DRSLs seem to guide all procedures, policies and decisions, and are evident in the culture of University Academy.

Curriculum:

a) To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum, reflecting the Utah Life Skills: A Guide to Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions for Success?

The educational staff of University Academy works diligently to make sure curricula used with its students align with the Core Curriculum and the Utah Life Skills.

b) To what extent does the curriculum engage **all** students in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking skills?

When students come to University Academy, they usually have assignments from their home school. University Academy works closely with the student's home school to keep each student on a level with his or her classmates. Educational activities vary widely and reflect the curriculum of the home school.

c) To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's DRSLs?

University Academy presents curriculum that focuses on the school's DRSLs within both the educational and the therapeutic programs.

d) How does the staff use assessments to drive curriculum to ensure that **all** students can reach the intended learning outcomes?

University Academy uses assessments of various types to drive the curriculum for each student. The educational program is individually adapted to meet unique student needs.

Instruction:

a) To what extent do teachers use a variety of instructional strategies to enhance student learning?

University Academy uses a variety of instructional strategies to meet the distinctive needs of each student. The school works closely with the student's neighborhood school to maintain continuity and help the student to have a positive educational experience.

b) To what extent have the school and the staff developed strategies for instruction that build the capacity for explicitly teaching the identified DRSL in every classroom?

University Academy is just beginning to built instructional strategies specific to the DRSLs. The student population and the program of the school lend themselves to explicit teaching of the DRSLs

c) To what extent is the school's professional development program guided by identified instructional needs, and how does it provide opportunities for teachers to develop and improve their instructional strategies that support student learning?

In light of the small educational staff, professional development is often designed to complement or support both the educational and therapeutic programs.

d) To what extent are teachers proficient in their content area, knowledgeable about current research on effective instructional approaches, and reflective on their own practices?

The educational staff are properly licensed and endorsed for their assignments. It is evident that the members of the educational staff are continually adapting and self-assessing their own and each other's teaching and instructional methods.

e) To what extent does the school effectively implement a well-defined plan for the integration of technology into its curriculum, instruction, and assessments?

University Academy has limited although sufficient access to technology. A small computer lab is available to students, and the presence of electronic media was evident in the classrooms. Students are given access to technology as needed to meet individual needs.

Assessment:

a) To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments with performance standards based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?

The educational staff uses the Woodcock-Johnson as an initial assessment. University Academy relies heavily on assessments from the students' neighborhood schools for placement and individual student curricula.

b) To what extent does the school have a process to fairly and equitably assess school-wide and individual progress in achieving academic expectations?

This question does not apply to University Academy; due to the students' short length of stay, the educational program differs from traditional schools. University Academy's main educational goal is to help each student keep up with the coursework from the student's home school. Teacher observations are the most reliable tool to assess student achievement.

c) To what extent does the professional staff use data to assess the success of the school in achieving its academic expectations?

In light of the school's unique situation, University Academy has no school-wide academic expectations. Students are enrolled for a very limited time, and the main goal of the school is to give students a positive school experience while working with the student's home school to maintain the student's academic program.

d) To what extent does the school's professional development program allow for opportunities for teachers to collaborate in developing a broad range of student assessment strategies?

This question does not directly apply to University Academy. The professional development program must meet the needs of both the academic and therapeutic elements. The entire staff meets monthly for "brown bag" lunches. The educational staff is also encouraged to attend conferences and workshops with an emphasis on mental health and education.

e) To what extent is there organizational agreement on the use of a school-wide scoring tool to assess the identified DRSL?

Teacher and staff observations are the essential tools used to assess the DRSLs.

CHAPTER 3: NAAS SUPPORT STANDARDS

Leadership and Organization:

a) To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate that actively supports teaching and learning?

- The educational staff works as a team to promote quality instruction, and has created a positive learning environment for students.
- b) To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative to monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness?
 - University Academy involves all members of the staff to monitor student achievement and instructional effectiveness.
- c) To what extent does the leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and allocation and use of resources at the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment which aligns with the school goals, DRSLs, and school improvement?
 - The principal is very skillful in the management of the school and its operations. Funding for the school is limited, but it is evident to the observer that University Academy is a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment that strives to meet the needs of its students.
- d) To what extent does the school leadership empower the entire school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning through meaningful roles in the decision-making process?
 - The members of the small staff of University Academy work well together to meet the unique needs of its students. Shared responsibility and respect are apparent throughout the facility.
- To what extent has the school established a formal system through which each student has an adult staff member who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school-wide expectations for student learning?
 - University Academy is distinctive in this aspect, in that every staff member knows and cares about every student. The entire staff assists and is actively involved to help students to achieve academically and realize a positive school experience.

School Services:

This standard is dealt with in the school's NAAS Annual Report, which requires specific responses and information regarding student support services, guidance services, health services, library information services, special education services, and family and community services.

Facilities and Finances:

This standard is addressed in the school's annual report to NAAS, which requires specific responses regarding the physical plant, finances, audit of school records, advertising, etc.

CHAPTER 4: NAAS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STANDARD

Culture of Continual Improvement:

- a) To what extent has the school developed and implemented a comprehensive school improvement plan using Collaborating for Student Achievement, the Utah accreditation/school improvement process that is reviewed and revised on an ongoing basis?
 - University Academy has developed and is in the process of implementing a comprehensive school improvement plan to meet the goals the school has set.
- b) To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through an aligned and ongoing professional development plan focused on the school's goals for improvement?
 - The professional development program is part of the plan of the University Neuropsychiatric Institute (UNI), which is based on serving the needs of the total child.
- c) To what extent is the new/revised school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up and is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?
 - No critical areas were identified or observed at University Academy. The school's commitment is to maintain the services and to adapt as student needs demand.
- *d)* To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?
 - University Academy has created an atmosphere of collaborative cooperation that not only supports productive change but encourages continuous improvement.

CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY BUILDING

- *To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships* within *the school?*
 - University Academy as part of UNI has developed a very collegial relationship to meet the needs of its students/clients. A relationship of trust has been established with several local schools and districts.
- b) To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?
 - University Academy works very closely with the students' neighborhood schools and districts. Students have participated in community service projects as part of their experience at University Academy.
- c) To what extent has the school engaged the school community in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?
 - The school's self-study was prepared by the educational staff and ratified by the entire staff. The school community has developed and maintains a process that seeks to advocate for the students in various ways.
- d) How are results of school improvement identified, documented, used, and communicated to **all** stakeholders?
 - University Academy is accountable to other accrediting agencies, the university, and local schools and districts. The academic goals are shared and reported regularly as required by the various entities.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

• The Visiting Team commends University Academy for the excellence of its program, which demonstrates to students what a positive educational program can be. Most students come to University Academy with a history of failure in school. In a very short time, most leave with a sense of achievement and success in a school setting.

• The Visiting Team commends the staff for the culture of caring and acceptance that is evident at University Academy. There is an aura of acceptance and respect throughout. The students were at ease and on task, and seemed "right at home" in their surroundings.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that University Academy strive to update its curriculum, materials, and resources. Textbooks, computer software, and other educational resources appear to be outdated.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the school investigate the possibility of enlarging the classroom space. The current classroom is cramped and ill designed, especially for secondary students. At the present time there is not sufficient space, desks, etc. to accommodate a full class of students. There need to be some areas for individual study, but also enough space for full-class instruction and participation.